

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ([see official post here](#))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY2017 Community-based Marine Debris Removal

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-ORR-2017-2004997

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.999, Marine Debris Program

Dates: Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 14, 2016. Note: When developing your submission timeline, please keep in mind that the registration process in the online System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and Grants.gov may take between three and five business days or as long as several weeks (see Section IV. G. of this Federal Funding Opportunity). If you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency's system has received your application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. No fax or email applications will be accepted. Use of U.S. Postal Service or another delivery service must have a tracking number. Applications not adhering to postmark or submission deadlines will be rejected without further consideration.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Marine Debris Program, authorized in the Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act, codified at 33 U.S.C. 1951-1958, provides funding to support locally-driven, marine debris prevention, assessment, and removal projects that will benefit coastal habitat, waterways, and NOAA trust resources. Funding for this purpose comes through the NOAA Marine Debris Program as appropriations to the Office of Response and Restoration, National Ocean Service. Projects awarded through this grant competition will implement effective, on-the-ground marine debris removal activities, with priority for those targeting medium- large-scale debris, including derelict fishing gear. Projects should also provide benefits to coastal communities, and create long-term ecological habitat improvements for NOAA trust resources. Through this solicitation NOAA identifies marine debris removal projects, fosters awareness of the effects of marine debris to further the conservation of living marine resource habitats, and contributes to the understanding of marine debris composition, distribution and impacts. Successful proposals through this solicitation will be funded through cooperative agreements. Funding of up to \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants in FY2017. Typical awards will range from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP), a division of the Office of Response and Restoration, leads national efforts to address marine debris. The mission of the NOAA MDP is to identify and solve the problems that stem from marine debris through research, prevention, and reduction activities, in order to conserve and protect our nation's marine environment and coastal economy from the impacts of marine debris as well as ensure navigation safety. Marine debris is defined as "any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment or the Great Lakes" (15 C.F.R. § 909.1).

A principal objective of the NOAA MDP is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to organizations with the expertise to identify, evaluate, and execute marine debris removal projects. The activities supported by this solicitation develop impactful, community-driven and cost-effective projects that improve living marine resource habitats through the removal of marine debris. These activities align with NOAA's mission to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources, and promote stewardship and a conservation ethic for NOAA trust resources.

A second objective of the NOAA MDP is to promote marine debris awareness, prevention and tangible project outcomes by collaborating with diverse entities and groups. These include partnerships with public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, anglers, boaters, industry (e.g. the commercial fishing industry, fishing gear manufacturers, other marine industries, and the plastic and waste management industries), corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academics, and local, state, and federal government agencies.

B. Program Priorities

The highest program priorities for this solicitation are the detection and removal of derelict fishing gear and the removal of marine debris, with emphasis on medium- to large-scale marine debris that have a negative impact on NOAA trust resources and important habitat areas. Derelict fishing gear includes, but is not limited to, such items as abandoned crab or lobster pots, fish nets, and synthetic (e.g., monofilament, polypropylene) line. Such applications must address applicable federal and state laws regarding handling and ownership. Medium and large-scale debris are items that generally cannot be manually removed by an individual.

NOAA trust resources include living marine resources and their habitats, including commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine fish and shellfish); coastal habitats; diadromous fish species; endangered and threatened marine species; marine mammals and marine turtles; marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, other coastal habitats; Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). NOAA trust resources can also include marine habitats and resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves and areas under state coastal management programs, including Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes. NOAA is also interested in proposals for removal projects in urbanized areas; however, as with all other proposals, such projects must have a primary emphasis on debris removal to benefit NOAA trust resources and must clearly lay out the direct links to such resources.

Other priority activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Proposals that pair removal activities with technically-sound, cost-effective habitat monitoring that measures the benefits of debris removal to NOAA trust resources. This may include pre- and post-removal monitoring of the natural resources at the removal site, water quality analyses, or other activities that will provide additional data on the benefits of marine debris removal and how habitats and/or species recover from impacts caused by marine debris. Such monitoring projects may receive higher priority under this funding opportunity, as this is an emerging focal area for the NOAA MDP.

- Derelict vessel removal and associated vessel debris removal activities. Proposals for derelict vessel removal activities must demonstrate direct benefits to the aforementioned habitats. Proposals should also identify specific vessels or discrete target removal areas and utilize existing prioritized inventories of derelict vessels such as those maintained by state regulatory agencies. Proposals with a derelict vessel removal component should indicate that a search for responsible parties, such as the vessel's owner, has been conducted and that no acceptable responsible party exists.

- Detection and removal from marine, estuarine, or beach environments of debris resulting from hurricanes or other natural disasters.

- Repeated shoreline or riparian cleanup projects are not a high priority for this competition. However, such projects are eligible if they are coupled with a significant, high-quality outreach program or volunteer involvement that aims to reduce or prevent future accumulation of marine debris. Such projects may include cleanups of shoreline litter, as well as timed, targeted watershed "hot spot" cleanups to prevent seasonal debris inundation into sensitive habitats utilized by NOAA trust resources. For such activities, NOAA has developed standardized marine debris shoreline survey protocols to facilitate regional and site-specific comparisons of debris loads. If a proposal has a shoreline cleanup component, applicants should contact NOAA to discuss whether it would be appropriate to

incorporate NOAA debris data collection protocols, which are posted at <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/research/marine-debris-monitoring-and-assessment-project>.

- Derelict piling removal projects should have a meaningful benefit to the resource or a strong debris impact-related reason supporting removal (e.g., derelict pilings that snag marine debris and add to the impact of this debris in that area or pilings that are breaking up and generating more debris). Such projects will be considered only if there is a strong link to habitat impacts and the piling removal is one component of a greater marine debris removal proposal or are recognized as a priority through a regional prioritization process.

Strong proposals will integrate innovative, sustainable approaches to disposal of debris (i.e. re-use, recycling, energy recovery, use of open shipping capacity to reduce transport costs (also known as "backhauling"), partnering with local waste management companies, etc. NOAA may consider the disposal methodology and whether these types of sustainable disposal options are integrated into the project as a selection factor when making final funding recommendations.

Proposals emphasizing general program coordination are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization's existing day-to-day activities or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead, and travel. Because funding is limited, proposals that request funds for large equipment purchases will be a low priority. If a project involves collection facilities, other long-term operations, or equipment purchases, the application should identify how the project will continue and be sustained beyond the award period. Projects focused on removing hazards to navigation or human health, or removals for aesthetic purposes are not a focus of this grant competition, although they are eligible to be sub-components of a removal project.

Prevention, outreach, education, volunteer activities and data collection are important aspects of debris removal projects. Proposals are encouraged to include such activities as project components, but should not be the main focus of the project - proposals that focus mainly on prevention through education and outreach are not a priority for this competition. These activities should be tied to, and include substantial interaction with the targeted user groups prioritized in Section I. A. For outreach activities in general, applicants are encouraged to incorporate existing outreach and educational resources into their projects, including those available for download at <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>. Similarly, proposals may include any associated habitat restoration costs that may be needed, however such costs must be minimal and directly address habitat impaired by debris removed under the project.

Applicants should also note that the following activities, in general, will not be considered under this competition: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state, or

federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages under federal, state, or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute, or regulation.

Applications addressing other types of pollution not fitting the definition of marine debris provided in Section I. A. are not priorities for this solicitation and may not be considered.

C. Program Authority

Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. 1951-1958)

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Funding of up to \$2,000,000 is expected to be available for this grant solicitation. The actual funding amount available is contingent upon FY2017 Congressional appropriations. NOAA will not fund proposals for removal activities at less than \$15,000 or more than \$250,000 under this solicitation. Typical project awards range from \$50,000 to \$150,000. For projects that include habitat recovery monitoring activities, applicants may request additional funds not to exceed \$100,000 for such activities, for a project of up to \$350,000. In such cases NOAA would work with successful applicants to determine final levels of monitoring effort and funding.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for any or all proposals. The number of awards to be made under this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funding requested by recommended applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to NOAA by Congress.

NOAA anticipates that between 8 and 15 awards will be made under this solicitation. In FY2015, the latest year for which information is available, 13 projects were funded, ranging from \$35,000 to \$195,000. The total grant funding level was approximately \$1,380,000, which was matched by almost \$1,500,000 in non-federal cost-share. The exact amount of funds to be awarded and the number of awards made will be at the discretion of NOAA following pre-award negotiations with highly meritorious applicants. NOAA may request that a highly ranked applicant submitting more than one meritorious proposal combine all or parts of its proposals into one award. Publication of this opportunity does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of available program funds. Awards may include funding from other programs or agencies.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications should cover a project period from one to three years in length. However, NOAA expects that all removal activities should be completed within two years of the start date of the award, and that the third year would be used for monitoring activities only. If monitoring activities are to be conducted before or following removal, NOAA may consider applications with a period of performance beyond 24 months as long as such activities are to be completed within a reasonable time frame given the characteristics of the resource being monitored. Applications for renewal or supplementation of previously-awarded NOAA MDP projects are allowed, however any proposal to continue work on an existing project will be subject to the competitive process and will not receive preferential treatment. In some cases NOAA may fund a project with incremental funding, usually in a multi-year format. If incremental or multi-year funding is awarded, in which NOAA only obligates funds initially for the first phase of a project, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent time periods; additional funding is contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to program mission and priorities, and the availability of funds. The earliest anticipated start date for projects will be August 1, 2017 - applicants should consider this when developing plans for marine debris removal activities.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through cooperative agreements since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in aspects of the project. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to, activities such as hands-on technical or permitting assistance, support in developing protocols (e.g., for data collection or monitoring), tracking the progress of removal efforts through site visits and progress report evaluation, discussing development of meaningful performance measures to assess project outcomes, and involvement in public meetings and events to highlight marine debris removal activities.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

In accordance with the Marine Debris Act, eligible applicants are state, local, and tribal governments whose activities affect research or regulation of marine debris and any institution of higher education, nonprofit organization, or commercial (for-profit) organization with expertise in a field related to marine debris. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Interested federal agencies may collaborate with eligible applicants but may not receive funds through this competition.

Foreign organizations and foreign public entities are not eligible to apply. All projects must take place within the United States or territories or their respective waterways.

NOAA is strongly committed to broadening the participation of veterans, historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. NOAA encourages proposals involving any of the above institutions.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grant programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of the NOAA Marine Debris Program is to fund projects that leverage the investment of Federal funds with other contributions from a broad range of public and private partners. To this end, Federal funds may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of a project under the Marine Debris Act. Applicants must provide a minimum 1:1 ratio of non-Federal matching contributions to NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed project. In addition to required cost sharing, NOAA encourages applicants to leverage additional investment where possible.

"Cost sharing or matching" is defined by 2 C.F.R. 200.29 as "the portion of project costs not paid by Federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by Federal statute)." Any shared costs or matching funds and all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind contributions, will be accepted as part of an applicant's cost sharing or matching when the contributions meet the criteria listed in 2 C.F.R. 200.306. For example, matching funds may come from a variety of public and private sources and may include third party in-kind goods and services (e.g., private boat use, volunteer labor, etc.). In addition, applicants are permitted to combine contributions for allowable costs from non-Federal partners when they meet the criteria in Section 200.306, such as not being contributed as match for other projects, and being available within the project period stated in the application. Federal contributions cannot be used as match without a specific legal authority, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants may also choose to designate part or all of their Federally-negotiated indirect costs as match. Refer to Section IV. F. 2. "Indirect Costs".

If the match requirement cannot be met, the Marine Debris Act allows the NOAA Administrator to waive all or part of the matching requirement if the applicant can demonstrate the following:

- 1) no reasonable means are available through which applicants can meet the matching requirement and
- 2) the probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

Any applicant wishing to request a match waiver must provide a match waiver request letter or provide other language in the required budget narrative as a part of the application package being submitted. The request must contain a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, descriptions of attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the incorporation or local availability of matching contributions.

In accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA has waived the requirement for local matching funds to applicants in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All applicants should also note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4. "Project Costs." As such, if available, the inclusion of matching contributions is encouraged.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the cost share amount reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should carefully document matching contributions, including the names of participating volunteers and the overall number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to individual marine debris removal projects. Letters of commitment for any secured matching contributions expected for an award should be submitted as an attachment to the application.

The Marine Debris Act also allows the NOAA Administrator to authorize, as appropriate, the non-federal share of the cost of a project to include money paid pursuant to, or the value of any in-kind service performed under, an administrative order on consent or judicial consent decree that will remove or prevent marine debris.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Not Applicable.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms, general instructions, and supplementary instructions specific to the NOAA Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, can be found on Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). If the application forms and instructions for applicants cannot be downloaded from Grants.gov, please contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 240-533-0425).

B. Content and Form of Application

Applications should be sufficiently detailed in accordance with the guidelines and information requirements listed in this Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), and should be able to be completed within the specified project period.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to apply through the Grants.gov website. Applications submitted through the Grants.gov website should include only three files in addition to the federal application forms noted below:

1) the project summary, project narrative and data management plan,

2) the budget justification, and

3) all other attachments combined, including resumes, maps, and support letters. Adobe PDF files are the preferred format.

Please visit <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants> for helpful information on putting together and submitting the above documents/information.

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application must be mailed to the NOAA Marine Debris Program (see Section IV. G. "Other Submission Requirements" for complete mailing information). Forms SF-424, SF-424B, and CD-511 paper-copy submissions must be signed by the application's Authorized Representative. **IF PAPER COPY APPLICATIONS ARE NOT SIGNED BY THE AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE, THE APPLICATION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR REVIEW.** No fax or e-mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound or stapled in any manner.

Each application must contain the following documents, unless otherwise noted below:

-Required Federal Application Forms (available from Grants.gov), including the following:

- SF-424 - Application for Federal Assistance
- SF-424A - Budget Information, Non-construction Programs
- SF-424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs
- CD-511 - Certifications Regarding Lobbying

- SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: (if applicable)
- Project Summary (described below, 2 pages);
- Project Narrative (described below, 12 pages);
- Budget Narrative (described below, 4 pages);
- Data Management Plan (described below, 2 pages);
- Curriculum vitae or résumé of each of the primary project personnel (as applicable);
- Maps with removal site location(s) highlighted (as applicable);
- Letter(s) documenting private landowner or public land manager support (as applicable);
- Other letters of support (if applicable); and
- Other relevant attachments important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as summaries of regional marine debris action plans, project site photographs, or design plans are encouraged to be included in the proposal package (20 pages).

1. Project Summary (2 pages):

A brief project summary must include the following components:

- 1) Applicant Organization;
- 2) Project Title;
- 3) Site Location (nearest town or watershed, and geographic coordinates if known);
- 4) Removal activity Start Date (not the proposed award start date);
- 5) NOAA Trust Resources to benefit from the project (habitats and species currently using the project area or expected to benefit and the anticipated biological function to be restored by debris removal. This section should also mention any listed threatened or endangered species in the project area or in the vicinity);
- 6) Project Scope (briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds and proposed techniques that will be used);
- 7) Area to Be Improved (pounds of debris to be removed from the marine

environment, acreage restored, and other measurable outcome)

8) Project Timeline

9) Permits (identify permits expected to be necessary for this project and current status of applications or consultations)

10) Federal Funds Requested and Non-federal Match Anticipated

11) Overall Project Cost

12) Partner and Volunteer Support Anticipated (hours/tasks)

13) Letters of Support (list those included with the application, particularly those from public agency resource personnel familiar with the issue or project area)

2. Project Narrative (12 pages)

The project narrative should incorporate the components of the evaluation criteria (see Section V. A. "Evaluation Criteria"). It should be no more than 12 pages long (in 12-point font with 1" margins) and should give a clear presentation of the proposed work. In general, proposals should clearly demonstrate anticipated benefits to specific NOAA trust resource habitats (as described in Section I. A.); describe how these benefits will be achieved through marine debris detection, assessment, and removal; identify the range of species and/or resources expected to benefit, including the anticipated biological function to be restored by debris removal and describe the project location. The area in which project activities will occur must be clearly delineated, preferably on a map. Applications should list the trust resources currently found in the project site, describe short- and long-term objectives and goals, including specific performance measures, detail the methods for carrying out and monitoring (if applicable) the project, and clearly explain the project's significance to enhancing habitat to benefit living marine resources with specific examples.

The applicant should indicate whether the proposed project is part of a larger, ongoing effort or is otherwise prioritized in a publicly vetted, published planning document (e.g. the Honolulu Strategy, the Great Lakes Marine Debris Action Plan, the West Coast Marine Debris Strategy, etc...). Proposal narratives should explicitly list or otherwise cite such documents for verification purposes, including the page number if referencing a specific action or issue within the plan.

To protect the federal investment, a letter of commitment is required from relevant landowners for projects on private land or from relevant resource agency personnel for projects on public, permanently protected land. The letter of commitment should provide assurance that the project is supported, and will be maintained for its intended purpose. Documentation of plans for long-term project management should also be included.

To ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, implementation of marine debris removal projects should have broad, clearly identified goals and specific, measurable objectives. In order to track project success, funded projects will need to be able to report the total amount of debris removed (pounds), total area or extent cleaned or restored (acres and/or miles), types of debris encountered, and volunteer hours involved. Applicants may choose to include other performance measures relevant to demonstrating project success. Such metrics may include: expected footprint (in acres or square-feet) of removed debris; number of volunteers as well as total volunteer hours; number of removal operations; number of discrete items removed (e.g., crab pots, gill nets, pilings); percent of identified problem areas addressed by removal activities; estimated re-accumulation rate; number of fishers who receive training on the safe removal of derelict gear or specific debris types; expected weight of material recycled, prevented from entering the marine environment, in pounds. Reporting on project progress and evaluating project objectives for effectiveness (e.g., anticipated biological functions to be restored by the debris removal, comparing initial removal targets to post-removal results) will be required of all accepted applicants.

Not all projects and applicants are expected to include a habitat and/or species monitoring component. Those proposals that incorporate a more in-depth monitoring component in addition to debris removal activities (per Section I. B. above) should describe, in detail, the methodology for monitoring or post-removal evaluation. These studies should be designed in a scientifically rigorous manner to assess factors indicative of habitat or species improvement through project and location specific metrics (e.g., increased presence, abundance, density or other similar metrics). Monitoring protocols should be designed to measure these improvements over a span of time appropriate to the targeted habitat/species (in some cases, monitoring may take longer than one year). Monitoring proposals should describe the anticipated, long-term ecological and socio-economic outcomes of the project; describe the approach to planning, developing and implementing the study design; describe rationale for proposed survey techniques and parameters; and advance our scientific understanding of marine debris monitoring by publishing peer-reviewed literature on project accomplishments (if appropriate). Any proposed monitoring is expected to be cost-effective and appropriate to the scope and scale of the project to evaluate a project's benefits. NOAA will work with successful applicants who have included an in-depth monitoring plan to ensure the appropriate metrics are monitored to link removal to habitat or species improvement.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the legal authority to conduct the project activities within the proposed project area, and understand what permitting requirements exist for work to be conducted as described in the proposal. To provide assurance that the project will expeditiously meet environmental compliance and permitting requirements, projects that would require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project. This should include the appropriate contact information for

each permitting agency, permit status, and documentation of all secured permits. Proposals must indicate the project's readiness and should ensure that on-the-ground debris removal activities will begin reasonably soon after the project's start date.

Proposals should also describe the project's disposal arrangements to ensure debris would not potentially be re-introduced,. Strong proposals will integrate innovative, sustainable approaches to disposal of debris (i.e. re-use, recycling, energy recovery, use of open shipping capacity to reduce transport costs (also known as "backhauling"), partnering with local waste management companies, etc.).

The project narrative should describe the organizational structure of the applicant group, identify proposed project staff, and detail their experience and qualifications in managing grants and implementing marine debris removal projects. Examples of successfully implemented past projects, or the organization's experience successfully managing federal grants are encouraged. If known, the applicant should state the level of NOAA involvement in and/or support for the project and include contact information of relevant NOAA staff.

The project narrative should also describe community involvement in the project, such as contributions from community partners, volunteer opportunities, citizen participation, education/outreach/stewardship plans, and efforts to disseminate information on project goals, results, and/or the sources of project funding and support. If applicable, the narrative should explain how the proposed project would complement or encourage other local marine debris prevention or removal, restoration or conservation activities. Community participation may include involvement in the physical debris removal during the project, involvement in marine debris prevention and education activities, hands-on training, and/or monitoring activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires NOAA to analyze a project's potential environmental impacts, hence applicants are required to provide detailed information on the project's activities. To support NOAA's analysis the project narrative should include details about site locations (please be specific as possible with location), species and habitat(s) to be affected, on-the-ground project activities and processes proposed, the time of year that work will take place, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, potential introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, impacts to coral reef systems). Successful applications cannot be recommended for funding until NOAA completes the NEPA process. Applicants may be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants may also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to accommodate such measures will result in denial of an award. Special award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have

outstanding NEPA compliance requirements. Projects that would require permits to complete the project should list them and include the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency, documentation of all permits already secured for the project, and an expected timeline for those permits not yet acquired. The type of detailed information described in this paragraph is critical to evaluating the significance of a project and its readiness to use available funding. See Section VI. B. 10. of this FFO for more information.

Participant safety is critically-important during project implementation. Proposals should demonstrate meaningful consideration for the safety of project participants during removal activities. It should be noted that all funded projects will be required to have a written safety plan governing all project-related activities, especially regarding the safety and management of volunteers. The safety plan should consider safety at the site during and after project implementation and take into account potential safety concerns for current and future uses of the project site.

If a project requires scuba diving or the use of surface-supplied air, it is the responsibility of the recipient organization to ensure that divers are qualified and trained to a level commensurate with the type and conditions of the diving activity being undertaken. The organization must describe their capacity (appropriate insurance, safety policies, etc.) to effectively oversee all proposed diving activities in the proposal. All diving activities must meet, or be specifically exempted from, OSHA guidelines. Assuming all other relevant safety conditions are satisfied, divers that are not advanced divers may perform only simple activities, such as underwater surveys and removal of light, non-entangling objects. Advanced divers are divers with advanced diving training for the proposed tasks and in compliance with OSHA guidelines. Snorkeling activities are similarly restricted, in that snorkelers should complete only simple activities such as surveys and removal of light, non-entangling objects. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that any diving activities under this award meet, at a minimum, all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to the type of diving being undertaken.

Activities that should be performed only by advanced divers include but are not limited to the following:

- Using hand tools or moving or lifting heavy objects where the tools or objects weigh more than 25 pounds underwater;

- Performing underwater tasks that require substantial physical exertion;

- Using lift bags; and

- Underwater removal of potentially entangling debris, such as nets, crab or lobster pots, or fishing line.

3. Budget Justification (4 pages)

To help draft the proposal budget, a Budget Narrative Guidance document (including content, format) can be found at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/training.html>.

The narrative budget justification should describe in detail the information listed in the applicant's SF-424A budget. It should describe total project costs, which include both the Federal and non-Federal shares, and should be organized by the object class categories from the SF-424A. Each object class should be described in as much detail as possible. The object class breakdown should match those found on SF-424A.

The narrative budget justification should also indicate if the proposal has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The source of any matching funds, including applicant or third party in-kind contributions, should be explained. If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a summary budget for the entire project should be provided; any funding other than the proposal request and match should be considered additional leverage.

Proposals with a monitoring component should clearly describe and separate out all monitoring or post-removal evaluation costs so that NOAA can evaluate the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of such activities. If multiple years of monitoring and evaluation are proposed, those costs should be broken out by year.

The narrative budget justification should also indicate if the applicant is requesting a waiver of all match requirements, as outlined above in Section III. B. "Cost Share or Matching Requirement". As previously stated, in accordance with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d), NOAA has waived the requirement for local matching funds to the insular areas defined above in Section III. B.

NOAA assesses budgets to determine the reasonableness, necessity, and adequacy of proposed costs for accomplishing the project objectives, and performs a cost analysis to assure that costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable in accordance with applicable federal cost principles.

4. Data Management Plan (2 pages)

Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how environmental data and information collected or created under a NOAA Marine Debris Program cooperative agreement will be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, if requested. Such data must be made available in a timely fashion (typically within two years), and should be free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction.

The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance provided by NOAA in Section VI. B. 9. below. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible.

A sample Data Management Plan may be found at:
<http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/proposal-submission-guidance-applicants>

5. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should not assume NOAA has any prior knowledge relative to the merits of the project described in the proposal. As such, proposals should include the relevant level of detail. Inclusion of supplementary materials (e.g., photographs, summaries of project designs, key diagrams, copies of secured permits) are strongly encouraged and do not count toward the project narrative page limit, although supplementary materials should not exceed 20 pages. Letters of support from partners, local and state governments, and Congressional representatives are also helpful in demonstrating support for the project. Such supplementary information should be combined and submitted as a single file in the Grants.gov application.

C. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Applicants should: (1) Be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting an application; (2) provide a valid Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number on an application; and (3) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency. The federal awarding agency may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant. Applicants should allow a minimum of seven days to complete the SAM registration, although complete registration for SAM may take several weeks if problems arise. Registration is required only once but must be periodically renewed. Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. Your organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) will be needed on the application form.

D. Submission Dates and Times

BEGIN YOUR APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS EARLY.

Full proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service on or before 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 14, 2016. Note: When developing your submission timeline, please keep in mind that the registration process in the online System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and Grants.gov may take between three and five business days or as long as several weeks (see Section IV. G. of this announcement). If you submit an application via Grants.gov you will receive a series of e-mail notifications for up to two business days before learning whether NOAA's system has received your application. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 14, 2016 will not be considered for funding.

PAPER APPLICATIONS RECEIVED LATER THAN 5 BUSINESS DAYS FOLLOWING THE CLOSING DATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. No fax or email applications will be accepted.

IMPORTANT: Applicants are strongly advised to submit in advance of the deadline. For all applicants, adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Volume on Grants.gov is at times extremely heavy. Applicants may submit in paper format according to the requirements of this announcement. Applicants submitting a paper application should allow adequate time to ensure it will be received on time.

Applications that have been submitted to other NOAA grants programs or as part of another NOAA grant may be considered under this solicitation.

E. Intergovernmental Review

Applications for federal financial assistance are subject to the provisions of Executive Order (EO) 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." All applications for funding under this competition are required to complete item 19 on the SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses, and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc.

F. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in

the course of carrying out the project. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment, and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Currently, allowable costs are determined by reference to 2 C.F.R. 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards." All sub-awards are also subject to these federal cost principles. Award recipients are subject to 2 C.F.R. 200.317-.326 when implementing contracts under an award.

Any pre-award costs incurred before the NOAA Grants Office provides a notice of award are at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of awards will be August 1, 2017. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing plans for proposed project activities. Consistent with 2 C.F.R. 200.458, pre-award costs are allowable only with the written approval by NOAA.

2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. Applicants with approved indirect cost rates may propose a portion or all of their indirect costs as match, since the valuation of such costs has already been Federally-approved and documentation is readily available.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If an applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency they may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs (as allowable under 2 C.F.R. §200.414). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is: The NOAA contact for indirect costs is Lamar Revis, Grants Officer, NOAA Grants Management Division; lamar.revis@noaa.gov.

G. Other Submission Requirements

NOAA WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE SUBMISSIONS. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.?

Applications should be submitted through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>).

Applicants should note that it may take up to four weeks or even six weeks for first time users to register with Grants.gov and the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register with SAM. Applicants should allow a minimum of five days to complete SAM registration; registration is required only once, but must be renewed periodically.?

NOTE: Even if an applicant has registered with Grants.gov previously, the applicant's password may have expired or its SAM registration (formerly Central Contractor Registration [CCR]) may need to be renewed or updated prior to submitting to Grants.gov. (Note that an old CCR username will not work in SAM; you must create a new SAM User Account to renew or update your registration). Grants.gov will not accept submissions if the applicant has not been authorized or if credentials are incorrect. Authorizations and credential corrections can take several days. All applicants have to be registered in SAM in order to apply via Grants.gov and to be funded by NOAA. For further information please visit the SAM web portal (<http://www.sam.gov>). See also 2 C.F.R. 25. Electronic submission is encouraged.?

Users of Grants.gov will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. If an applicant has problems downloading the application forms from Grants.gov, contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or support@grants.gov.?

In addition, the Grants.gov validation process for a submitted application can take up to two business days to complete following submission through Grants.gov. Only validated applications are sent to NOAA for review. Please plan your time accordingly to avoid late submissions as such submissions will be rejected.?

If Grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, or internet access is not available to the applicant, a paper-copy application package (as outlined in Section IV. B. "Content and Form of Application") must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 p.m. EDT, October 14, 2016. Mailed applications must have a tracking number. The mailing address for paper applications is:

Tom Barry, NOAA Office of Response and Restoration, ATTN: MDP Project Applications, 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4 Rm. 10239 N/ORR5, Silver Spring, MD 20910

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that address the issues contained in these criteria are likely to be more competitive.

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (32 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The potential of the project activities to restore, protect, conserve, or enhance coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems vital to self-sustaining populations of living marine resources under NOAA stewardship (including commercial, recreational, threatened, or endangered species) through the removal of high-priority marine debris as defined in Section I. B. (20 points)
- The project's significance with respect to project area, amount of debris removed, or potential to reduce marine debris, considered in the context of the local environment. (5 points)
- Whether the proposal addresses a marine debris problem area and/or priority habitat, as evidenced by reference to a regional or national publicly vetted, published marine debris planning or strategy document. (5 points)
- Whether the proposal includes a Data Management Plan including descriptions of the types of environmental data and information created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, sharing, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. (2 points)

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (20 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The extent to which the applicant provides sufficient detail to complete a NEPA review, and provides assurances that implementation will meet all federal, state, and local environmental laws. Applications submitted with evidence of completed environmental

assessments, completed consultations and/or secured permits, and that demonstrate that proposed debris removal activities are legally permissible in the project area are likely to score higher on this criterion. See Sections IV. B. 2. and VI. B. 10. for more information. (5 points)

- The extent to which the applicant has described a realistic implementation plan that is achievable within 24 months. If applicable, the applicant has outlined a realistic, rigorous, and sustainable recovery monitoring plan to measure habitat and species benefit as a result of project effort. (5 points)

- The extent to which the applicant has described the ability to report measurable results. Such results should include the required performance metrics described above in Section IV. B. Those applications that identify parameters to reduce impacts to NOAA trust resources (e.g. accumulation and debris prevention rates, reduction in by-catch rates, number of acres restored) are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

- The overall feasibility of the project from a biological, ecological, and safety perspective, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound, likely to achieve project goals and objectives, and able to be conducted safely. If diving or snorkeling activities are being conducted, do they follow the safety guidance provided in Section IV. B. (5 points)

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (15 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The demonstrated ability or the potential of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing, and effectively managing and overseeing marine debris removal projects. (10 points)

- The facilities, grants management, and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage project/grant responsibilities. (5 points)

4. Project Costs (18 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. If funds are requested for partial support of a project, the

budget will be examined with respect to the overall project budget to allow an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- Whether the total project budget is likely to result in an effective and successful project. Applications proposing to expand an organization's day-to-day administrative activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving on-the-ground habitat improvements, and a comparison with rental costs should be provided to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats, and similar items will be a low priority. (5 points)

- Whether the proposed budget is sufficiently detailed, realistic, reasonable, and based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame. The budget breakdown and justification should be organized by object class as listed on form SF-424A, and cost share or match should be clearly identified. (5 points)

- The demonstrated need for NOAA funding to carry out the project and whether NOAA support is critical for debris removal activities to be implemented. (3 points)

- The overall leverage of other anticipated project funding, including cost share or match. Other than those proposals eligible for a waiver according to Section III. B. "Cost Share or Matching Requirement" (above), NOAA requires non-federal cost-sharing at a minimum 1:1 ratio of required matching contributions to federal funds. These funds or other resources should improve cost-effectiveness and further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia. Applications that provide documentation of secured match are likely to score higher on this criterion. (5 points)

5. Outreach, Education, and Community Involvement (15 points)

NOAA assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission, and for the Marine Debris Program, such activities specifically include education and outreach to the public and other stakeholders, such as the fishing industry, fishing gear manufacturers, other marine-dependent industries, and the plastic and waste management industries. For the Community-based Marine Debris Removal Project Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The extent to which the activities proposed will involve citizens in removal activities and develop long-term stewardship and conservation ethics within the community. (5 points)

- The level of public outreach to be conducted in the proposed project, including plans to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and their roles, sources of funding and other support provided; and the potential for the proposed project to encourage future removal activities, conservation, and protection of living marine resources or complement other local restoration or conservation activities. (5 points)

- The depth and breadth of community support, as reflected by the diversity, strength and involvement of project partners and local entities (through cash contributions, or donation of in-kind goods and services such as boat time and technical expertise). This includes whether letters of support from project partners, state and local governments, members of Congress, private landowners, or relevant resource agency personnel familiar with the issue are included with the proposal, and are positive and indicate willingness to assist the project achieve its objectives. (5 points)

B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened to determine if they are eligible, complete and responsive to this funding announcement. NOAA, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application with a minor administrative discrepancy that can be easily rectified or cured. Eligible proposals will then undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process.

Applications will be evaluated by at least three professionally and technically qualified reviewers according to the evaluation criteria and weights described in this solicitation. Reviewers may include NOAA officials, officials from other Federal agencies and state agencies with subject matter expertise, (e.g., coastal management agencies and fish and wildlife agencies), and other private and public sector experts. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score. Reviewers may discuss applications with each other, but scoring will be on an individual basis and no consensus advice will be given. Reviewer comments, project scores, and a rank order will be presented to the NOAA Marine Debris Program Selecting Official. The Selecting Official will recommend proposals for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division.

Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans or budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award. NOAA may select all, some, or none of the applications, or part of any application, ask applicants to work together or combine projects, defer applications to the future, or reallocate funds to different funding categories, to the extent authorized. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA program staff.

The NOAA Grants Officer will review financial and grants administration aspects of a proposed award, including conducting an assessment of the risk posed by the applicant in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility, qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by NOAA may consider items such as the financial stability of an applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports and audit findings concerning the applicant and the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific award conditions that respond to the degree of risk may be applied by the NOAA Grants Officer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. 200.207. In addition, NOAA reserves the right to reject an application in its entirety where information is uncovered that raises a significant risk with respect to the responsibility or suitability of an applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NOAA Grants Officer. The award decision of the Grants Officer is final and there is no right of appeal.

C. Selection Factors

The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the selection of a proposal out of rank order is justified based on one or more of the following factors:

1. The availability of funding
2. The balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By institution type
 - c. By partner type
 - d. By habitat type
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA, partner organizations, and/or other federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I. A. and B. of this FFO
5. The applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are

made to the NOAA Grants Management Division.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest-scored proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file until in accordance with the policies set forth in the Department of Commerce Grants Manual, which in general is 3 years.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by May 1, 2017. Typically, the earliest start date for projects will be August 1, 2017, dependent on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities. Applicants should consider this timeline when developing requested start dates for proposed project activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, and/or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, final scope of activities, project duration, and specific NOAA substantial involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant, the NOAA Grants Management Division, and NOAA program staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award is received from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Award notification will be made electronically from the NOAA Grants Management Division via Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management program. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award, is available at <http://go.usa.gov/SNMR>.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions: Successful applicants who accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online at <http://www.ago.noaa.gov> and at <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>. If the Department of Commerce publishes revised Standard Terms and Conditions prior to issuance of awards under this solicitation, the revised Standard Terms and Conditions will apply.

2. Special Award Conditions: In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package may contain special award

conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable, such as the required use of the NOAA Marine Debris Program Performance Progress Report approved by OMB under control number 0648-0718 for submitting semi-annual progress reports.

3. Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements: Through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.

4. Department of Commerce (DOC) Pre-Award Notification Requirements: The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), are applicable to this solicitation.

5. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, you should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 5 U.S.C 552, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

6. Certifications Regarding Tax Liability and Felony Criminal Convictions: When applicable under appropriations law, NOAA will provide certain applicants a form to be completed by the applicant's authorized representative making a certification regarding Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any Federal law.

7. Limitation of Liability: In no event will NOAA or the DOC be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds. Recipients are subject to all Federal laws and agency policies, regulations, and procedures applicable to Federal financial assistance awards. This program is subject to the availability of funds.

8. Executive Order 12866: This action has been determined to be not significant for

purposes of Executive Order 12866.

9. (a) **Data Management Guidance:** Environmental data and information collected or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made discoverable by and accessible to the general public, in a timely fashion (typically within two years), free of charge or at no more than the cost of reproduction, unless an exemption is granted by the NOAA Marine Debris Program. Data should be available in at least one machine-readable format, preferably a widely-used or open-standard format, and should also be accompanied by machine-readable documentation (metadata), preferably based on widely used or international standards.

(b) Funding recipients are responsible for establishing their own procedures and hosting capabilities for collected environmental data in order to ensure that public access to grant-produced data is enabled to the maximum extent practical. The NOAA Marine Debris Program does not require any specific data format, access method, or other technical guidance beyond what is described in this section, however the use of open-standard formats and methods is encouraged. The proposal budget may include reasonable costs associated with compliance with this guidance.

(c) Proposals submitted in response to this announcement must include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages describing how these requirements will be satisfied (see Section IV. B. 4 above). The Data Management Plan should be aligned with the Data Management Guidance described in this section. The contents of the Data Management Plan (or absence thereof), and past performance regarding such plans, will be considered as part of proposal review. A typical plan should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; methods for providing data access; approximate total volume of data to be collected; and prior experience in making such data accessible. The costs of data preparation, accessibility, or archiving may be included in the proposal budget unless otherwise stated in the Guidance. Accepted submission of data to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) is one way to satisfy data sharing requirements; however, NCEI is not obligated to accept all submissions and may charge a fee, particularly for large or unusual datasets.

(d) The NOAA Marine Debris Program may, at its own discretion, make publicly visible the Data Management Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) from funded proposals, or use information from the Data Management Plan to produce a formal metadata record and include that metadata in a Catalog to indicate the pending availability of new data.

(e) Applicants are hereby advised that the final pre-publication manuscripts of

scholarly articles produced entirely or primarily with NOAA funding will be required to be submitted to NOAA Institutional Repository after acceptance, and no later than upon publication. Such manuscripts shall be made publicly available by NOAA one year after publication by the journal.

(f) Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data Management Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

(g) Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under: https://nosc.noaa.gov/EDMC/documents/Data_Sharing_Directive_v3.0.pdf

10. NEPA Requirements

As stated in Section IV. B., NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>, including NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations. Consequently, as part of an applicant's award package, and under their description of program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. Failure to do will result in denial of an application.

Applicants proposing marine debris removal activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA Marine Debris Program's Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be informed after the peer review stage and may be asked to help prepare an EA prior to an award being made or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities, if one exists. NOAA may make funding recommendations based on the level of effort needed to fulfill NEPA requirements. The NOAA Marine Debris Program PEA and FONSI can be found on the NOAA Marine Debris Program website:

http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/mdp_pea.pdf.

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposed activities to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests for or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA Marine Debris Program staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

C. Reporting

Reporting requirements are described at 2 C.F.R. 200.327-.329 and in the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6 month periods. Progress reports are to be submitted to NOAA via NOAA's electronic Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each 6 month project period ends. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award. Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information. The project progress report template will be provided by the NOAA MDP. Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 to March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 to September 30 (due by October 30) throughout the award period and are submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division via NOAA Grants Online system. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (16 U.S.C. 6106) includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.fsr.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Tom Barry (tom.barry@noaa.gov, 240-533-0425).

VIII. Other Information

Not Applicable.